



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

Saint Brigid, Abbess of Kildare (+525)

Commemorated on February 1

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Saint Brigid lived at the time when the holy Church of Christ was first becoming established in Ireland. In those days, the country was wild and many of the kings and men of power were brutal and cruel. The power of God's grace to change people, and even whole nations, was manifest in this holy one. Saint Brigid is remembered above all else for her holy love, compassion, and charity. By her Christian example, she taught kings to be merciful, the greedy to be charitable, and the pagans to seek Christ the Saviour.

Saint Brigid was born about the middle of the fifth century, while Saint Patrick the Enlightener was yet proclaiming the Gospel, and Ireland was half pagan and half Christian. She was the daughter of a pagan chieftain named Dubthac, and her mother, Brocessa, was a bondwoman in his household, and was a Christian. Saint Patrick, in defense of his ministry (his *Confession*), mentions

his anxiety over the plight of slave women who became Christians. If,

In any case, Dubthac's lawful wife became quite jealous of the



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as in Brocessa's case, their master happened to be a pagan, they could be greatly hindered in the practise of a Christian life.

slave Brocessa, so shortly before Brigid's birth he sold the woman to a different master, who was also a pagan, with the understanding that

the child to be born would, if it liked, be returned to him in a few years, when it had grown somewhat. For her part, Brocessa had only her faith in Christ as consolation in all these doings, and she saw to it that the child Brigid was baptized at the first opportunity, and was very careful to instruct her in Christian piety during the years of her upbringing.

When Brigid was about ten years old, she was returned to the household of her father, Dubthac. She labored in cooking and other housekeeping duties, and sometimes tended the sheep, as she persevered in prayer and in the pious way of life her mother had taught her. While her legal position was that of a slave, with Dubthac as her master, she always remembered that she was actually his daughter, and acted as such. Thus, she did not hesitate to generously give alms to anyone in need who asked for help. In this way, Brigid was giving away much of her father's food, property, and wealth. When Dubthac realized this, he became quite angry. He did not use violence against her, however; probably he had some regard for her as his own offspring. Instead, he decided to put her in the service of the king. In this way, he would get her out of his house, and it could be assumed that she would not be as free with the property of the king himself.

So it was that one day Dubthac took the young Brigid to the fortress of the King of Leinster. He had Brigid wait in his chariot until she would be sent for, and, since it would not be proper to carry any weapon in the presence of the king, he took off his sword and left it with her. He went in and spoke with the king for a short while; then he went to bring Brigid before the king. Arriving at his chariot, he found that his sword was missing. The blessed Brigid readily confessed that she had given it as alms to a poor leper who had passed by, that he might sell it, since she had nothing else with her to give him. The enraged Dubthac seized her and brought her in to complain to the king. The king, however, was a Christian, and instead of sharing the man's anger, he was quite edified. He commended Dubthac for having such a daughter, and counseled him to release the maiden from slavery, that she might take her proper place in society as a chieftain's daughter. Dubthac was dumbfounded at this; if Brigid gave away so much of his wealth as his slave, what would she do as his acknowledged daughter? He decided to give her the requested freedom, but at the same time to settle her in an honorable marriage. Thus, she would no longer be responsible to him, but to her husband.

About this time, Saint Brigid used her new freedom to visit her mother Brocessa, who was still in slavery to a pagan master in a place quite distant from Dubthac's estate. She knew that her mother was weak, sickly, and overworked, so she went to assist her in her labors: grinding corn, churning butter, and tending cows. By Saint Brigid's prayers and diligence in labor, the dairy soon began to produce more butter than ever before. Ever faithful in almsgiving, the Saint always set aside large portions of butter and milk to give to the poor. The heathen master heard of this and became angry, even though he realized that his dairy was now in excellent condition, with much butter being sold every day, and profits actually increasing. He went to the dairy, but found nothing there to complain about, so he merely ordered that a large vessel he had should be filled with butter, that he might bring it to his wife. At that moment, however, only a very small amount of butter was left, and when the master realized it, he began to reproach the blessed one for wasting his goods. In response, the Saint signed herself and the small quantity of butter left in the churn with the sign of the Cross, and began to transfer the butter to the master's vessel. By God's grace the butter was multiplied, the large vessel was filled, and some butter still remained in the churn. The pagan was amazed, and was moved to believe in Christ, the true God. At Saint Brigid's request, he granted Brocessa her freedom, and in due time he and all his household received Holy Baptism. The Saint settled her mother among her kinsfolk and returned to her father.

While she was absent, Dubthac had arranged for her to marry an honorable man who was a poet; now, in Ireland poets were highly esteemed, and ranked next to the highest nobility. Brigid asked to meet the man, and they discussed his goals in life, and the qualities he was seeking in a wife. The Saint then told him that she knew just the right maiden—told him her name and where she lived—who would make a perfect wife. The poet thanked her and set off to find this other maiden, who did eventually become his bride. Their life together prospered by Saint Brigid's blessing and prayers. The Saint then informed her father that she did not wish to marry at all, but rather wanted to dedicate her virginity to Christ. As might be expected, he did not understand this desire and tried to oppose her, but he finally acquiesced and let her go live as she pleased. It is not clear whether or not Dubthac ever actually became a

Christian; in any case, he placed no more obstacles in his daughter's path.

Saint Brigid was not the first Irishwoman to take up the monastic life: in his writings, Saint Patrick himself comments on the great number of young women and widows who had thus dedicated themselves. However, they were not yet organized in communities. Each nun remained in her own home, worshiped in the local church, and strove to live in prayer and quiet as much as possible, even in the face of violent opposition from parents and family members. Saint Patrick wrote that "they do this without their father's consent, and suffer persecution and lying reproaches from their kinsfolk." Saint Brigid, however, began to live the ascetical life with seven other young women: this is considered the establishment of the first actual convent of women in Ireland. After a time, they presented themselves to the bishop to be tonsured. Out of humility, Saint Brigid presented herself last, as the youngest of them; the holy bishop, however, tonsured her first, and established her as mother and abbess of the community that she had founded.

The little community grew; many of those who had already become nuns wanted to avail themselves of the benefits of proper spiritual direction; newly-converted women were also moved to dedicate themselves to Christ. With the blessing of the bishops, Saint Brigid began to travel throughout Ireland to establish new monastic houses. It is not certain which convent was the blessed one's first, for she founded a great many in a short space of time. Those early convents were little groups of huts, made of clay and wattles, which the young nuns built themselves. Around the settlement, an earthen or stone wall would be erected. As soon as a community was firmly established, Saint Brigid would appoint a capable sister as superior, and, taking one or two others with her, she would continue to a new spot and build another convent. Like Saint Patrick himself, Saint Brigid traveled the length and breadth of Ireland. She journeyed on rough and dangerous roads in a little chariot. At least twice she was thrown from the chariot: one of these times she cut herself badly, another time the horse bolted and came to a halt at the edge of a precipice. Yet she continued her labors without fear, trusting in God her Protector.

But if courage was one of Saint Brigid's chief qualities, she was best known for her cheerful generosity. Now that she was a nun and had to look after a whole community, she gave even more generously to the poor

than she had as a child. The sisters and benefactors of the community sometimes wondered whether she was not *too* generous in her almsgiving; but Almighty God, in Whom she trusted, never failed to provide what was necessary for either the nuns or the poor that were aided by them. The number of poor folk that she fed is known only to God, and she saved many from prison and death.

For many years, then, the blessed Brigid struggled and guided her nuns. God granted her many gifts of grace. She was able to console those in sorrow and grief. Once, a leprous woman asked for milk. Since there was none at hand, the blessed one gave her cold water, but the water was turned into milk, and when she drank it, the woman was healed. The Saint cured other lepers as well, and granted sight to the blind. Once, at the going down of the sun, she was giving counsel to a nun named Dara, who was blind. Grieving that her sister was not able to behold the beauty of God's creation, Saint Brigid prayed that He would open those blind eyes to see the glory of the sunset. God granted her prayer. The nun gazed on this earthly beauty for a while, and then, turning to her abbess, she said, "Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the glory of the world is so clear to the eyes of the body, the glory of God is less clear to the eyes of the soul." So Saint Brigid prayed once more, and Dara's eyes grew dark again.

The Saint's most renowned foundation was at Kildare (the Church—or Cell—of the Oak, *Kill-dara* in Gaelic), which was her usual abode in her later years. She lived to be eighty-eight; then, when she had prepared herself by the Communion of the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, she reposed in peace on February 1, around the year 525. When she was born, Ireland was half pagan and half Christian; at the time of her blessed repose, thanks to her labors and those of Saint Patrick's other disciples, the Irish were all Christians, and had already begun to send out new heralds to proclaim the Gospel in other lands.

According to The Book of Lismore, "Everything that Brigid would ask of the Lord was granted her at once. For this was her desire: to satisfy the poor, to expel every hardship, to spare every miserable man. Now there never hath been anyone more bashful or more modest or more gentle or more humble or more discerning or more harmonious than Brigid. In the sight of other people she never washed her hands or her feet or her head. She never looked at the face of man. She nev-

er spoke without blushing. She was abstemious, she was innocent, she was prayerful, she was patient: she was glad in God's commandments: she was firm, she was humble, she was forgiving, she was loving: she was a consecrated casket for keeping Christ's body and His blood; she was a temple of God. Her heart and her mind were a throne of rest for the Holy Spirit. She was single-hearted [towards God]: she was compassionate towards the wretched; she was splendid in miracles and marvels."

Saint Brigid is (after Saint Patrick) the second patron saint of Ireland: by her holy intercessions, O Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Dismissal Hymn. Fourth Tone

HAVING learned of things divine by the words of Patrick, thou hast proclaimed in the West the good tidings of Christ. Wherefore, we venerate thee, O Brigid, and entreat thee to intercede with God that our souls be saved.

Kontakion. Third Tone

AT the Church of the Oak, thou didst establish thy sacred monasteries for those that took up the Tree of life, even the Precious Cross, upon their shoulders. And by thy grace-filled life and love of learning, thou didst bear fruit a hundredfold and didst thereby nourish the faithful. O righteous Mother Brigid, intercede with Christ, the True Vine, that He save our souls.

Megalynarion

NURTURED in all faith and the fear of God, * thou wast given power * o'er the spirits of wickedness; * and thy godly wisdom * and holiness, O Brigid, * illumined and led countless souls to the realms of light.

Dismissal Hymn, Kontakion, and Megalynarion
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Judeo-Christian

by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

There are three definitions of the term "Judeo-Christian":

- 1) The American Media definition
- 2) The Self-Contradictory definition
- 3) The Orthodox Christian definition

1) *The American Media definition:* This definition may also be termed the "American Melting Pot," or the "American Assimilation" definition. When the vast majority of English-speaking people see the words "Judeo-Christian," what probably comes to mind is a vague idea about the moral precepts of the Old and New Testaments all jumbled together, so that they somehow include the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Our Father. This is probably what 99% of the people understand by the term "Judeo-Christian."

2) *The Self-Contradictory definition:* There are a number of people who say that the term "Judeo-Christian" is self-contradictory. The reason for this, as the rabbi of your local synagogue may find it necessary to explain, is that modern Judaism is not Scriptural; it is

Talmudic. (This will depend, of course, on how liberal or traditional the rabbi is.)

The *Talmud*, according to the *Oxford University Dictionary*, is "the body of Jewish civil and ceremonial traditional law consisting of the ... binding precepts of the elders, additional to and developed from the Pentateuch" that is, the first five books of the Old Testament.

There are two versions of the Talmud: the Palestinian Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud.

To put it simply, the Talmud is the composition of rabbis who, for the most part, lived *after* the destruction of the temple in A. D. 70. The Talmud is *not* Holy Scripture, nor biblical, in any way. It is purely and clearly *rabbincical* precepts.

The real problem with the Talmud is that many of its passages are vehemently *anti*-Christian. In fact, the venom and the seething hatred found in such passages are so intense, we cannot dare to describe or repeat them here. True, eighty percent of the Jewish people today do not subscribe to these hate-filled axioms found in the Talmud, but twenty per cent, the "observant" Jews do, out of principle, endorse them. Such being the case, many people rightfully ask, what is the

meaning of the term “Judeo-Christian” in such a context? It is, they affirm, self-contradictory.

3) *The Orthodox Christian definition:* In 2002, I wrote an “Encyclical on Peace in the Holy Land,” in which I defined what the word “Israel” truly means for Orthodox Christians. This, in part, is what I wrote there:

What does the sacred hymnology of the Church have to say about the term “Israel”? What are the teachings of the holy and God-bearing Fathers regarding this matter?

What—for example—is the significance of the fig tree, which was cursed by our Saviour and which withered away? The following hymns from the Ninth Ode of the Palm Sunday canon for Compline provide us with the proper understanding:

The rod of Moses was turned into a serpent, and the rod of Aaron, which had been withered and fruitless, was changed into a green branch that brought forth leaves; but the lawless synagogue was changed into a fruitless fig tree.

Thou hast cursed the fruitlessness of the law, since it brought forth as leaves the shadow of understanding of the letter, but had no fruit of deeds because of its lawlessness....

On the other hand, what do the ancient patristic texts teach us about the *true* Israel, the *new* Israel, the *new* Jerusalem?

Israel, Thy Church on earth, taken out of the nations... with a full heart and a willing soul sings [in praise of Thee].

Apostolic Constitutions, VII, 35

Through Christ, Thou hast brought home the nations to Thyself as a people for Thine own possession [Deuteronomy 7:6], the true Israel, beloved of God, and seeing God.

Apostolic Constitutions, VII, 36

For the true spiritual Israel and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham (who in uncircumcision was approved of and blessed by God on account of his faith, and called the father of many nations) are we [Christians]

who have been led to God through the crucified Christ.

St. Justin the Philosopher,
Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, XI, 5

The word of God speaks to those who believe in Christ as being one soul, and one synagogue, and one church.

St. Justin the Philosopher,
Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, LXIII, 5

Even so we [the nations], who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelitic race.

St. Justin the Philosopher,
Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, CXXXV, 3

All who through Christ have fled for refuge to the Father, constitute the blessed Israel.

St. Justin the Philosopher,
Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, CXXV, 5

[God], through Jesus Christ, introduces to the Kingdom of Heaven both Abraham and his seed, that is, the Church, upon which also is conferred the adoption and the inheritance promised to Abraham.

St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 8

The patriarchs and prophets sowed the word concerning Christ, but the Church reaped, that is, received the fruit.

St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 25

What the prophets have, according to the aspect of their message, sometimes called Jerusalem, sometimes the Bride, sometimes Mount Sion, and sometimes the Temple and God’s Tabernacle, is the Church.

St. Methodius of Olympus,
The Symposium, VIII, 5

In his commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Saint Basil the Great writes the following:

Indeed, though few from Israel were found to be of the elect, the portion of those that believed in Christ was saved. Wherefore [that portion] became like yeast among the na-

tions, drawing all to its own likeness, so that thereby it might become both Israel and the People of the Lord, and so that he that was of the nations who believed might become a Jew mystically and also an heir of the spiritual promises.

PG 30:160c-161a

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, in his exegesis of the same prophetic book, tells us that when the Prophet speaks of “the spiritual Jerusalem,” “the spiritual Judea,” or “the spiritual Sion,” he is proclaiming them as types of the Church of Christ, and as the true Sion (PG, 70:65d, 68c, d, 781d).

Elsewhere, in his commentary on the same book, Saint Cyril writes:

As for those that are the remnant, that is, the saved who have believed in Christ, though they be a remnant of Israel, they shall become, it says, a great multitude.

PG, 70:188c

In his interpretation of Isaias 45:25 (“and in God shall all the seed of the sons of Israel be glorified” *Sep-tuagint*), the same Saint has this to say:

Those who are called the sons of Israel among them, we affirm, are the holy Apostles and Evangelists; for they were Jews according to the flesh. And their sons, in turn, are those who are called through them to the knowledge of Christ.

PG, 70:988c.

In the Paschal Megalynarion, we Orthodox Christians chant, “Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee.” What is this “new Jerusalem,” but the spiritual city of God that presides over the “new Israel,” that is, the true followers and disciples of the Messiah and God of Israel? Orthodox Christians are, as the Saints teach us, the New Israel, the true Israel, God’s Chosen People, a People for His own possession (Titus 2:14).

In his commentary on the Heirmos of the Ninth Ode of the Pascal Canon, Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain writes:

O New Jerusalem, the catholic Church of Christ, shine, shine ...for the glory of the Lord, that is, the Cross of Christ (John 13:31), the divinity of Christ (Ephesians 1:17), and the divine radiance of Christ’s countenance [at Christ’s transfiguration on Mt. Tabor] have arisen upon thee, the Church from among the nations.

The people that sat in darkness (that is, the nations) have seen the great light of divine knowledge; but for the unbelieving Jews, Christ the Sun of Righteousness, has hidden [His light], whereas for us who are from the nations and have believed He dawned forth, because we acknowledged the dawn of His divinity, and we have been illumined with the light of piety and virtue. Furthermore, the hymnographer tells the New Sion to dance spiritually and to rejoice over the resurrection of Christ her Bridegroom.

St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain
Eortodrómion, p. 448

Of course, this is only a small selection of what the Church Fathers have to say about who is the true Israel today. Many more sources could be quoted. (For example, Saint John Chrysostom’s eighteenth Homily on the Epistle to the Romans speaks eloquently and comprehensively about “the remnant” of Israel.) The citations mentioned above suffice to show us the spiritual insights of the Saints on this particular subject.

This, then, is what the Orthodox Christian definition of the term “Judeo-Christian” should be.

We should be clear: it is *not* a patristic term, and you should know that what we have said above is the only acceptable sense an Orthodox Christian can attribute to that term.

We are the New Israel. Our very beliefs, the attire of our clergy, and our manner of worship reflect our undeniable Hebraic roots.

If you want to get a good taste of what Jewish worship was like in our Saviour’s day, come to an Orthodox Christian vespers service. There, you will truly understand the term “Judeo-Christian.”

A Pastoral Encyclical

of His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

My beloved Orthodox Christians:

Recent events in our Church have saddened all of us. Families have been divided; people who have not read the materials of issue, or even the most elementary religious sources, expound their personal opinions as if they were speaking with divine authority. It is a grievous situation that reminds us of St. Basil the Great's description of the Church in his own chaotic times.

Archbishop Auxentius of blessed memory used to tell us that all these divisions, and the misinformation that accompanies such disputes, are a wound in the Body of Christ. However, His Beatitude told us yet another thing: although divisions and disputes bring grief and separation – especially when it involves those who have been together for a long time – God is above and sees all things. He discerns the hearts of men, and knows what is true and what is false; who is guilty and who is the innocent victim.

This is why I am grieved, but not overwhelmed, by recent events in our Church, because so many good things may emerge from this tribulation. From the pangs of childbirth, a new child is brought into the world. After a natural disaster, a new resolve is born to re-build and to do things better and to make them stronger. Those who are discerning learn to profit from the reverses of life.

As Orthodox Christian bishops, we are duty-bound to strive primarily for the unity of the faithful entrusted to us in the true confession of the Faith. Secondly, it is our obligation to seek this unity with all the Orthodox Christian faithful throughout the world. It is in this spirit that our Holy Synod resolved last year, in the meeting held in October, along with the knowledge and consent of our Clergy Synaxis, to extend a hand of friendship to one of the Synods of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, the Kallinikos Synod. As the events following revealed, and as subsequent documentation concerning the state of ecclesiastical affairs in Greece confirmed, our gesture of good will was premature. The majority of our bishops and clergy had repeatedly expressed their desire by vote and voice to proceed in this matter with caution and patience. But some clergy refused to listen to the voice of the majority.

It is important to note also that such negotiations with other Churches must always be carried out in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Once that trust has been violated, however, it is only with difficulty that it can be restored.

In the course of our discussions, I addressed some specific questions concerning doctrinal issues to two bishops of the aforesaid Greek Synod – questions that were vital to the establishment of solid foundations in the quest for further co-operation. In one case, the first bishop of the Greek Synod promised to provide answers, but never did so. The second bishop provided an answer that, from an Orthodox

Christian point of view, was completely inadequate and which could just as easily have been uttered by a bishop of the “Cyprian of Fili” jurisdiction, or by an ecumenist. The question pertained to the giving of Holy Communion to new calendarists (who, in turn, now give Communion to non-Orthodox).

It is important to understand that the questions asked of these two Greek old calendar bishops do not pertain to secondary, but nonetheless important, issues regarding, say, the frequency of the reception of Holy Communion, the depiction of the “icon” of the Holy Trinity, the reception of Holy Communion on Sundays, or the rules of fasting. No, the questions asked of these bishops pertain to vital matters dealing with the doctrinal integrity of the Church.

As I mentioned above, the answers from the two aforesaid bishops of the Greek Synod were either not forthcoming or flawed.

This, in addition to subsequent, well-documented information that has come our way – and which has never been refuted by the aforementioned bishops – has caused us to pause and to reconsider our stance vis-à-vis the various old calendar Synods in Greece.

Perhaps in the future, ecclesiastical matters in Greece will clarify themselves. We must all hope and pray for this.

In the meantime, we here in North America must all apply ourselves to the progress and spiritual cultivation of our parishes, to the growth and organization of our dioceses, and to the general spiritual welfare of our clergy and faithful. There is a great deal of work to be done on this side of the Atlantic. And now, thanks to the generosity of some benefactors, we have a new, much larger diocesan home for our Metropolis headquarters and our Academy of Saint Symeon the New Theologian; this opens many possibilities and opportunities to us as a local Church in North America.

My beloved, we are a young Church, but we have strong and ancient roots. This should be a formula for a sound and healthy growth, if the Lord so wills. We have received many, many blessings from God.

Now, with His help, let us apply ourselves to the task that He has given us, and prove ourselves worthy of His gifts. Amen.

Your fervent suppliant unto the Lord,

✠ Ephraim, metropolitan

August 14/27, 2011
Protocol Number 2910

The New Saint Philaret House

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These photos were taken prior to renovations. In the next issue of The Faithful Steward, God willing, we will have photos of the renovated house.



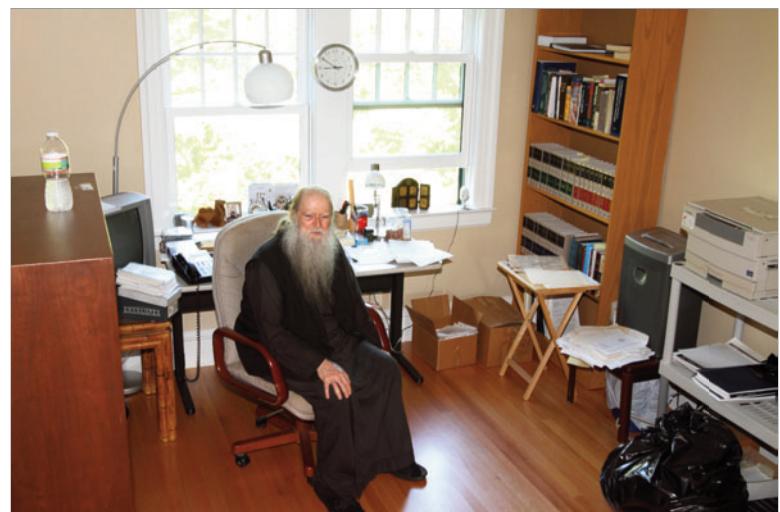
Front view



Chapel



Reception room



Metropolitan Ephraim in his new office



Nicholas Snogren organizes Bishop Demetrius's new office



Computer, packing and printing area



First floor veranda



Lazarus Mamo stocking the book and pamphlet rack



The future library, 673 square feet

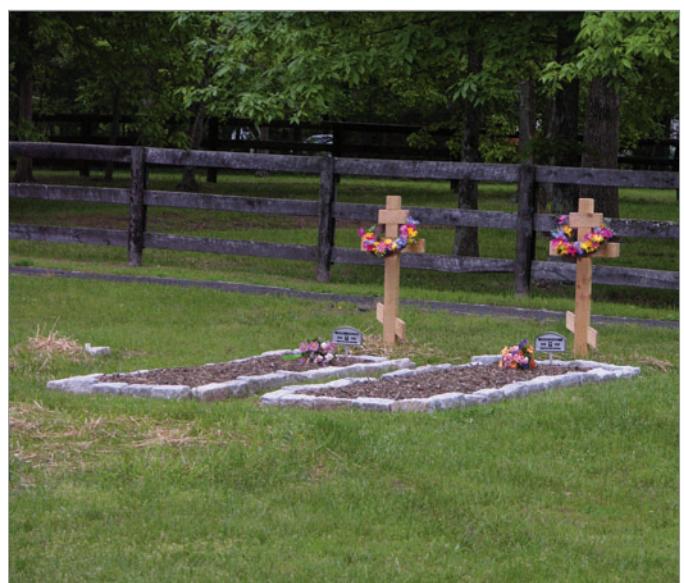
Photos from Catlett, VA



Metropolitan Ephraim, clergy, monastics, and parishioners gathered for the Hermitage of St. Mary Magdalene Feastday



Mid-Atlantic Picnic, May 9/22, 2011



The graves of Fr. Michael & Presbytera Helen Lightfoot

Axios!



Bishop Demetrius ordaining Hierodeacon Gregory

On Sunday, June 13/26, 2011, Father Gregory of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline, MA, was ordained to the Diaconate by His Grace, Bishop Demetrius of Carlisle.

Father Gregory was born Otari Babunashvili, in Tbilisi, Georgia, on February 2, 1979. At the age of 13 he and his mother moved to Barcelona, Spain, where he completed high school. Having been baptized as an infant, it was while living in Spain that he made a conscious decision to become an Orthodox Christian. He attended what was at that time the only Orthodox Church, belonging to the Serbian Patriarchate, in Barcelona. Here he served as an altar boy and began reading books about the faith and contemporary issues facing the Orthodox Church. These books were published in Georgia by brothers Gelasi and Zurab Aroshvili who are now priests of our church in Georgia. Otari was made aware that the official patriarchates, including the patriarchate of Georgia, had compromised on matters of faith by their involvement in the heresy of ecumenism. Therefore, in 1997, Otari joined the many monastics and faithful who ceased commemorating the patriarch of Georgia and were given shelter by the hierarchs of the Holy Orthodox

Church in North America. On the Feast of the Dormition, 1997, during the first Divine Liturgy celebrated in Georgia under the omophorion of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, Otari, together with other faithful, was accepted into the bosom of the Church by Father Andrew Boroda.

For a considerable time, Otari had desired to experience monastic life. In 1998, while attending university in England, he had the opportunity to meet Abbot Isaac of Holy Transfiguration Monastery who was visiting a convent there. This meeting made an indelible impression on Otari, and the next year he visited the monastery in Brookline. Here he fulfilled his desire to experience Orthodox monasticism and to meet the monastery's founder, Archimandrite Panteleimon.

After completing his studies in England, Otari returned to Georgia and took an active part in church life there. During this time he struggled with the decision to become a monastic or to remain in the world. Finally, in 2007, after much prayer and with the advice of Father Panteleimon, Otari became a novice at Holy Transfiguration Monastery. He was tonsured Father Gregory on March 1/14, 2010 in honor of Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica.

Valuable Lessons from the Holy Scripture and the Lives of the Saints

Compiled by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, in collaboration with
Athanasius George, a chanter at St. Mark of Ephesus Cathedral, Roslindale, MA

Let a man so account us, as ministers of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, that which is required in stewards is that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by man's judgement; yea, neither do I judge mine own self. For I know nothing by myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall there be praise unto each one from God.... God hath shown forth us the Apostles to be last, as ones appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ, but ye are wise in Christ. We are weak, but ye are strong. Ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and we labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I admonish you.

(I Cor 4:1-5, 9-14)

Giving no occasion of stumbling in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things we commend ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in scourgings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in vigils, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God, by the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true, as unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live, as chastened, and not killed, as grieved, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

(II Cor 6:3-10)

"Beloved, malice is a terrible and unsettling thing.

It is always at work and never ceases to effect its basic characteristic, which is to ascribe blame to those that are not at blame, to condemn the innocent, and to defame those that are pious and most Orthodox as heretics and impious. As proof of this, it is sufficient to mention the examples of the great teachers and saints of our Church: Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, Chrysostom and the rest, who were most pious and most Orthodox, but were defamed by their adversaries as impious and heretics.

"So if these great saints of the Church were not spared from malice and defamations, how would it be possible for us, who are not even worthy to sit at their feet, to remain above what they suffered and not endure such things? It is nothing new, therefore, that we also are being criticized and defamed with slanderous names and called heretics by certain people who are moved by malice, spite and hatred. [These latter] resemble those foolish Athenians who condemned the innocent man Aristides and wrote on an *óstrakon* [potsherd] against him that he deserved to be ostracized and banished from Athens, without having known him at all, but only from hearsay and from hearing from others that he deserved to be "ostracized" and exiled.* So we rush to slander people and we fulfill that popular proverb which says, 'When one dog barks, all begin to bark.'"

St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (in his apology to those who labeled him derisively as being one of the "Kollyvades," as if this were something evil!)

*Concerning the ancient Athenian practice of ostracism, and also concerning the distinguished, capable and honest Athenian leader Aristides the Just (who elicited the jealousy and malice of his fellow politicians), Plutarch writes the following:

The sentence of ostracism—to give a general outline—was as follows: Each voter took an *óstrakon* [a potsherd], wrote on it the name of the citizen whom he wished to remove from the city, and brought it to a place in the *agorá* [the city center] which was all fenced about with railings. The *árchons* [city elders]

first counted the total number of *óstraka* cast. For if the voters were less than six thousand, the ostracism was void. Then they separated the names, and the man who had received the most votes they proclaimed banished for ten years, with the right to enjoy the income from his property.

Now at the time of which I was speaking, as the voters were inscribing their *óstraka*, it is said that an unlettered and utterly boorish fellow handed his *óstrakon* to Aristides, and asked him to write the name "Aristides" on it. He, astonished, asked the man what possible

wrong Aristides had done him. "None whatever," was the answer, "I don't even know the fellow, but I am tired of hearing him everywhere called 'The Just.'"

On hearing this, Aristides made no answer, but wrote his own name on the *óstrakon* and handed it back. Finally, as he was departing the city, he lifted up his hands to heaven and prayed—a prayer the opposite, as it seems, of that which Achilles made—that no crisis might overtake the Athenians which should compel the people to remember Aristides.

Mother Christodouli, *2011



Mother Christodouli, a house nun from Scarborough, Ontario, reposed peacefully on August 29, 2011, ten minutes after receiving Holy Communion. The funeral took place on Thursday, September 1, at Holy Theotokos Convent in Newmarket. Predeceased by her husband Peter and son Jerry. Loving mother to Marina (Makedon) and Tina (John). Her constant presence will be greatly missed by her grandchildren Danny (Athena), Eleni, Michael (Stamatia), Androniki, Anthony (Laura), Christina (Greg), Michael and great-grandchildren Alexander, Nicolas, Julia, Dafni and Jacob. She was also great aunt to Bishop Demetrios.

Donations may be sent to: Holy Theotokos Convent,
4369 Faulkner Ave.,
Newmarket, ON L3Y 4W1

Names in parentheses refer to spouses.

The Value of Spiritual Reading

by Evgeniki Kochergin

“Your soul will be refreshed by reading books like these; they will give you a taste of that otherworldliness without which the Christian soul withers and dies, especially in our worldly times.” (St. John Chrysostom on spiritual books)

With the blessing and guidance of our parish priest, Father John Fleser, and His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim, the Sisterhood of Saint Lucia at Saint Anna’s Church in Roslindale, MA, established the Kandili Book Discussion Group in 2005. Since that time, we have read ten books on a variety of spiritual themes.

The Kandili Book Discussion Group has proved to be a wonderful way to incorporate more spiritual reading into our everyday lives. Titles are suggested by Sisterhood members and approved by Metropolitan Ephraim. “After the Holy Mysteries.... spiritual books are our greatest source of edification, education, sanctification, of cultivating and fortifying the soul. Spiritual reading is a form of prayer, the elders of the Holy Mountain would tell us.” (Father Panteleimon, Holy Transfiguration Monastery)

We take on average 6-8 weeks to read each book, setting a discussion date that asks a commitment from us as readers. We’ve found that this accountability helps us to read with more purpose and attention than we might otherwise give to our reading. The books connect us to the unbroken thread of our tradition and faith, as they remind us how to pray, how to fast, how to struggle, how to have faith, how to love, how to be humble, and so much more inspiring us to “put what we read into practice.” (Saint Theophan the Recluse)

At each meeting, we have a clergy moderator who opens and leads us in discussion of the book. We discuss the saint or spiritual subject, the time in which the saint lived, and historical context of the book. Often members will relate travel stories of trips to monasteries and to venerate saints’ relics. Questions are encouraged, and the discussion opens up to the group. In addition, we are developing a website that will direct readers to online and multimedia resources related to each book club selection. Audio recordings of discussion groups will also be posted there. Two recordings can be found at <http://prosecho.podbean.com/>.

We are looking forward to reading more titles and pray that our endeavors will encourage other parishes to form their own book discussion groups. Please feel free to email sisterhoodstlucia@gmail.com with comments or questions.

List of Books Read

July 2005, *Touchstone*

“A few words, written with love and pain of heart, concerning the heresy of our times and true Orthodoxy commissioned by the Holy Convent of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, Oinussai, Chios, 1976”

Available for download at

<http://www.hocna.org/defense/touchstone.pdf>

October 2005, *Elder Joseph of Optina*

February 2006, *A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain*

Conversations with an Athonite hermit.

Selected chapters available online at

http://www.pelagia.org/htm/b01.en.a_night_in_the_desert_of_the_holy_mountain.00.htm

June 2006, *Papa Nicholas Planas, 1851-1932: The Simple Shepherd of the Simple Sheep*

An example of the “living tradition” of Orthodoxy (ref. HTM foreward)

November 2006, *Saint Arsenios of Cappadocia*

Set against the backdrop of the “exchange of populations” in 1923, which witnessed over a million Orthodox Christians forcibly expelled from Turkey to begin new lives as refugees in Greece.

September 2007, *Elder Ieronymos*

Audio file of discussion led by Father Panteleimon at <http://prosecho.podbean.com/>

April 2007, *Tamama – The Missing Girl of Pontos*

Details six years of systematic national cleansing and genocide against the Greek population of the western part of the Black Sea area, 1912 to 1922.

“Waiting for the Clouds” is a movie based on the book that we screened at Saint Anna’s.

June 2009, *Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene*

The life and martyrdom of the Holy Hieromartyrs Raphael and Nicholas and Martyr Irene on Lesbos. The Prologue is written by Photios Kontoglou.

October 2010, *Against False Union*

Audio file of discussion led by Metropolitan Ephraim at <http://prosecho.podbean.com/>

September 2011, “Archbishop John Maximovitch,” *Orthodox Word*

Saint Xenia Camp, 2011



Future Trips with St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor

St. Spyridon's Church, Long Island, Bahamas: Dec. 26, 2011–Jan. 6, 2012

Holy Land Pilgrimage, Jerusalem: Summer, 2012

Convent of the Meeting of the Lord, Stanwood, WA: Summer, 2012

Holy Theotokos Convent, Newmarket, ON: Summer, 2012

New England Tour: Summer, 2012

Contact St. Paul's Fellowship of Labor by calling (814) 386-5254 or by emailing thespfl@gmail.com



About Our Logo A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

The Faithful Steward is the official newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. Under the editorship of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, *The Faithful Steward* appears three times yearly, and is delivered free of charge to the faithful of the Holy Metropolis of Boston. For others, a donation of \$2.00 an issue is requested.

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THE DIOCESE NEEDS SUPPORT

“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward* is in need of your support.



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

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